

What can you expect when they can't even spell? Ujamaa goes to BAND WARZ (sic) '90 (or, A Gripe of Epic Proportions)

by Luis Cardoso

(This article is dedicated to Social Club manager Matt Harris, whose generosity made it possible for Ujamaa to compete in the provincial finals of Band Warz '90.)

The thing is, even though I could say that I don't really care, or I didn't really want to enter in the first place, I'd be lying. Sure, I had some misgiving about entering the competition, but once we did, I was in it to win. And I think all seven of us were.

It all began one sunny October morning when I received a call from some cat named Stacey Crawford. He told me he worked at a bar called Ziggy's, and he was in charge of the provincial arm of a national competition called Band Warz (sic). He had chosen 6 bands from New Brunswick to enter, and we were one of the privileged few. The contest was a search for the best new original band in Canada, which meant each band was judged on their original music.

For six weeks, he told me, two bands would square off each Monday night at a bar called Fat Tuesdays; each band would have to play an hour of music with the stipulation that the final fifteen minutes of that hour be strictly original music, for it was on those fifteen minutes that they would be judged. The winners would play in a semi-final round for the provincial title. The winner of the provincial title would then move

on to the regional final in Halifax, and the winner there would proceed to the national final to be held either in Toronto or Vancouver. The national winner would receive \$175,000 in cash and prizes and a recording contract with MCA records. My initial response was apprehension: winning seemed a long-shot. It was also stipulated that we would have to pay our own expenses to Moncton, and we would not be paid for the performances. Once I decided that it was worth a shot, I then had the unenviable task of convincing the rest of the band; no small feat considering that entering meant a great deal of expense.

That done, it was time to put one hour of music together. The difficulty there would not be in coming up with an hour of music, but trimming down to what amounted to approximately nine of our songs. As we perform only original music, we felt that we had a major edge over the other provincial bands. At this point we knew of only one other band entered in the competition: the Druids. They were scheduled to play a week before our debut, and when they returned from their Monday night performance, the outlook was grim. Not only had they lost, but they told us that the judges were looking for commercial appeal. This had proved to be their downfall, as they are an alternative band of some integrity. The judges were local. A voice from Moncton radio station Q-103, a record company type from MCA records, and a recording representa-

tive from CMS studios.

The First Night

October 22 finally rolled about, and we were ready. We were up against a local Moncton band, formerly known as the Vicars, now called Free Meeting Place. They were on stage first that night. As we watched the Jim Morrison/Bono Vox writhings of their lead singer, we couldn't help but notice how alike their songs seemed. And we were most surprised when they played only 35 minutes of music, albeit all original except for a Hendrix piece.

It was time. We set up our equipment on stage, which took longer than the organizers had hoped, but we were finally ready. Stacey Crawford introduced us, and we were off. We flexed our muscles that night. We were a tight, slick reggae machine with two years plus of multi-weekly rehearsals, and constant gigging at UNB, Moncton, Saint John, and Halifax, and we showed it. We even did a medley of those of our songs we didn't have time to play. And we won. And that night I was hooked on winning that damned contest.

The Second Night

Before arriving in Moncton on November 5 for the semi-final round, I had heard from Stacey in a telephone call that the winner of the competition in New Brunswick could conceivably move directly to the national final in Toronto or Vancouver.



Ujamaa will be playing at tonight's Carribean Music Festival in the SUB Cafeteria. (a band so tight they even blink in unison!!!)

Apparently the competition in Halifax was very poorly organized, and many of the bands competing against us in Moncton were from Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. This we hadn't known. I also learned that there would be prizes for the winner of the provincial final: \$500 toward travel expenses to the final (a minuscule amount for a seven-piece band), and some musical instruments. And I discovered we would be competing against a Haywire type rock band from the Island called Curfew, and a country band from Moncton called Sweet Temptation.

When we arrived in Moncton for the semi-final, Stacey took me, along with the leaders of the other bands, aside for a discussion of events to come. He told us that the winner of the previous week's semi-final had dropped out of the competition. As a result, two of the three bands performing on our night would meet again for the final. In effect, we were playing this night to eliminate one of the three bands. He also told us that there would be a regional final in Halifax against a

band from Nova Scotia. Bummer. We were up first that night. We played an uninspired set. Some of us were tired and it showed; the songs lagged in tempo, and the excitement generated from the band on stage was missing. Still, I consoled myself, our material was solid and spoke for itself. Not to mention that things always seem worse from onstage than they do to the audience. Kwame had also given the judges a promotional package with a brief description of each of the songs we performed that evening so that they would get the full impact of the lyrical content.

Up next, Curfew. Yuk. They began with a lame set of covers ranging from "Twist and Shout" to Pink Floyd's "The Wall". Really atrocious stuff. They then began their fifteen minutes of original music: the first song saw all the band members save the blonde keyboard player leave the stage. He proceeded to sing a ballad accompanying himself with synth layer upon synth layer. Lame stuff. The band then returned

Cont. on p.17

O'TOOLE'S

- Nov. 29th LED-DEAD NITE
- Win posters, t-shirts, C.D.'s
- THE ROADHOUSE THAT ROCKS

FLASHBACK THURSDAYS

P.S. XMAS IS COMING, BOOK YOUR PARTY WITH US!

PIZZA HUT® PAIRS

2 MEDIUM CHEESE PAN PIZZAS

\$12.99*

*PLUS P.S.T.

\$1.99* PER TOPPING TOPS BOTH PIZZAS
\$17.99* FOR 2 LARGE CHEESE PAN PIZZAS
\$2.49* PER TOPPING - TOPS BOTH PIZZAS

©Pizza Hut is a Registered Trade Mark of Pizza Hut Inc. Registered user Pepsi-Cola Ltd. and nothin' but!

1180 Smythe Street
452-9988

F
R
E
E

D
E
L
I
V
E
R
Y

A
F
T
E
R

4
P
M

November 23, Cont. fr. p. 17
to churn out hard like every other band that precede Haywire to Platina Tiger, they copie drivell with no re But who knows would think? It and they might g Sweet Tempt stage. They struc fessional count played a full ho standards and re ginning their fif set. These guys cover band. T people's music getically; plenty Their original tu weak, especially side the country The audience l were the local were out in full The place was p to make sense to (Keep the folks with beer money set drew to a clo approached me audience respon ing. Nevertheless set overall. The of guys; very af talk to. And v declared winne each other and w It was to be co reggae riddims oriented contes The More revea a phone call fro learned that the now be held in would feature t ner of our pro vember 12 wo